

## **American Institute of Architects Selects KKE as National Honoree for its Diversity Recognition Program**

*KKE Architects is one of 12 national honorees of the American Institute of Architects' (AIA's) first annual Diversity Recognition Program. KKE was selected for its Architectural Youth Program, an after-school educational outreach and mentorship program dedicated to ensuring that high-school students from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds achieve an appreciation of architecture and related design fields. Introduced in KKE's headquarters in Minneapolis, Minn. 14 years ago, the AYP has flourished under the sponsorship and leadership of KKE, and has impacted the lives of more than 300 culturally diverse high school students, including students of color, young women, and those who might not otherwise be exposed to the design arts.*

March 3, 2009 (FPRC) -- PASADENA, CALIF. -- KKE Architects is one of 12 national honorees of the American Institute of Architects' (AIA's) first annual Diversity Recognition Program. AIA member submissions to the award program's inaugural year were chosen to reflect the industry's best practices in encouraging diversity. KKE was selected for its Architectural Youth Program, an after-school educational outreach and mentorship program dedicated to ensuring that high-school students from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds achieve an appreciation of architecture and related design fields.

The pilot Architectural Youth Program (AYP) began in the fall of 1992 in New York City and was developed from the observation that very few minority candidates were applying for available intern architect positions. Through research, statistics revealed and continue to show that few African American, Native American and Hispanic men and women are seeking employment as architects. This imbalance partially stems from the fact that few within this group study architecture and other design arts fields at colleges and universities. The AYP was established in an attempt to alter the current under-representation of minorities and women in these design fields.

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"Today, we are happy to speak of one of our first [AYP] students, Keon Blasingame, who not only successfully completed high school, but went on to receive his Masters in Architecture, on a

scholarship from the AIA Minnesota Architectural Foundation Minority Scholarship. This year, he was our first student to become an AYP instructor and administrator. We are happy to celebrate his success, his positive impact on his community, and our profession," says Jennifer Anderson-Tuttle, KKE's senior associate and AYP team leader.

In this unique position, Blasingame shares his thoughts: "While the interest was there, I had never been exposed to any practicing architects, as certainly there were none living in my community. Like others, I had watched Mike Brady on television, and completed a fair amount of research on the architecture profession in a junior high school career exploration course. However, in my research I grew increasingly discouraged as I realized that there were so few architects of color. ..when my high school Physics instructor pulled me aside after class and told me about the Architectural Youth Program, I jumped at the opportunity. Through my interactions with the program facilitators, I realized that the architectural profession was not only a viable option for me, but that there were a number of individuals who were willing to provide me with the guidance and assistance necessary to make my dreams come true!"

Through KKE's sponsorship of the AYP, students develop an appreciation for architecture and its role in society; explore a wide variety of interrelated arts disciplines; gain exposure to the working world and its myriad opportunities; and learn about the academic study needed to reach their professional goals. Ultimately, by encouraging these students' involvement in architecture and the design arts, the overall cultural life of our country is strengthened.

KKE and all the AIA Diversity Recognition Program's winning submission will be displayed at the 2009 AIA National Convention and Design Exposition in San Francisco from April 30 – May 2, and is accessible on the AIA web site [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org).

#### About KKE Architects, Inc.

KKE Architects, Inc. is a full-service firm providing a wide range of architectural, interior design and comprehensive planning services. Founded in 1968, this award-winning company has grown to become one of the Top 50 architectural firms in the country. With offices in Minneapolis; Las Vegas; Phoenix; Tucson; Irvine and Pasadena, Calif., KKE's professional staff of more than 200 offers a unique blend of expertise across a broad range of strategically focused market segments encompassing Housing, Office, Retail, Industrial, Hospitality, Entertainment, Justice, Education and Healthcare design. KKE continues to grow through an entrepreneurial spirit and a fundamental focus upon their clients' drivers...understanding their measure of success. For more information, visit [www.kke.com](http://www.kke.com).

Brian V. Arial, NCARB, AIA  
Director / Managing Principal  
KKE Architects, Inc.  
525 E. Colorado Blvd., Fourth Floor  
Pasadena, CA 91101  
626 796 8230  
626 796 8735 fax  
[barial@kke.com](mailto:barial@kke.com)  
[www.kke.com](http://www.kke.com)

#### Contact Information

For more information contact Brian V. Arial, NCARB, AIA of KKE Architects (<http://www.kke.com>)

626 796 8230

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